

Today, the National Library of Medicine begins a new chapter in its 133-year history. During this period of time, it has progressed from a shelf of books in the office of the Army Surgeon General to what many now consider to be the greatest collection of medical literature in the world.

The foresightedness of its leaders and the faithful devotion to duty of its librarians, researchers, clerks, and the many other specialists of its staff, have established a tradition of service that deserves highest commendation.

Those of us in Congress who have had an opportunity to know the accomplishments of the National Library of Medicine -- accomplishments often achieved under the most trying of circumstances -- are especially mindful of the vital role of the Library in the health advances that have been achieved by this Nation.

This site -- adjacent to the National Naval Medical Center, near the Walter Reed Army Medical Center and other great medical institutions in this area, and located on the grounds of this national research center -- will provide an unusually favorable setting for continued service to the medical, biological, and behavioral sciences.

Science, if it is to be healthy itself, must be able to surmount its obstacles, possess memory of the past, awareness of the present, and prediction of the future. The effective library can help service these requirements by supplying the memory of the things that have been done, making

available knowledge of present accomplishments, and acting as a communicator for all disciplines of science.

This country has made tremendous scientific gains in the past score of years. These gains have not been achieved by happenstance; they have been achieved largely as a result of increased support of studies into the major problems that confront us; they have been achieved through bold, new programs to increase the national pool of specially trained scientists; and they have been achieved through special efforts to expand and modernize the facilities for research and other health uses.

As all of you know, of course, more research is being conducted in this country today than at any time in its history. As a result, thousands upon thousands of experiments are being conducted and the results are being published. New methods and techniques are being tested, and again the results are being published. New journals and other scientific publications are being created. And swelling this unprecedented flow of scientific literature are scores of new types of "unpublished" information material that must be cataloged and made available to the scientific community.

The figures that attest to this expansion are dramatic indeed. According to the National Science Foundation, there were some 1,000 scientific and technical journals published in the United States in 1920. In 1957, the comparable number was almost 4,000. The increasing rate of scientific communication has been paralleled by the numbers of active Ph.D.-level scientists, whose ranks have expanded from 5,000 in 1920 to 64,000 in 1957.

These facts are but a small indicator of the tremendous impact upon our libraries of an expanding scientific effort. Acquisitions, reference searches, indexing, cataloging, and processing are but a few of the tasks involved in an increasingly complex library system. Today, the problems of storage, retrieval of published and unpublished information, processing of data, speedy dissemination of required information, translation, are among the challenges that face the great institution that is to occupy this ground.

I am certain that the National Library of Medicine will not only meet these challenges, but that it will also continue to provide leadership for the entire scientific library field. We are assured that this new building will provide all of the necessary facilities for a scientific library activity. But I believe that the future success of this national resource -- as it has in the past -- will depend upon the people who come here to do the work. If the officials and other employees who occupy this new building continue the high tradition of public service established by their predecessors, then the future of the National Library of Medicine will be assured.